

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 PM-07 NSC-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 NIC-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /107 W

----- 006455

P R 021127Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2918

INFO CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7162

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TH

SUBJ: MAY DAY AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

REF: A. FBIS BANGKOK D020220Z MAY 74

B. FBIS BANGKOK D020215Z APR 74

SUMMARY: THOUGH THE VENUE WAS A UNIVERSITY CAPUS, LABOR OUTNUMBERED STUDENTS ON 1 MAY 1974 IN THAMMASAT'S AUDITORIUM. THE VARIOUS SPEAKERS' MAIN THEME WAS THE STRUGGLE OF THAI URBAN AND RURAL LABORERS AGAINST THEIR EXPLOITERS IN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS IN BANGKOK--AND NEW YORK AND TOKYO. THE STUDENTS, IN THIS ADMITTEDLY LIMITED SETTING, MADE PROGRESS IN FUSING AN IDENTITY OF INTERESTS WITH LABORERS. END SUMMARY.

1. THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ACADEMICS COOPERATED WITH "LABOR ASSOCIATIONS" IN SPONSORING SPECIAL MAY DAY PROGRAMS ON MAY 1 THAT INCLUDED MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT, INSPIRING POLITICAL SPEECHES, AND WALL DISPLAYS ON THE STRUGGLE OF THAI LABOR OVER THE YEARS. THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES WAS A PANEL DISCUSSION IN WHICH SEKSAN PRA-CONFIDENTIAL

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SOETKUN AND THIRAYUT BUNMI PARTICIPATED, AND A SPEECH THERE-

AFTER BY DR. PUAI UNGPHAKON. THE UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM WAS JAMMED WITH LABORERS AND STUDENTS--THE FORMER FAR OUT-NUMBERING THE LATTER. THEY APPLAUDED OFTEN ON KEY POINTS THAT THE FIVE PANELISTS MADE, PARTICULARLY THOSE STATEMENTS CRITICAL OF OR MOCKING HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRATS, THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM, AND THE AMERICANS AND JAPANESE.

2. THE ESSENCE OF THE SPEECHES THAT PUAI AND THE PANELISTS MADE IS SUMMARIZED IN REFS A AND B. THERE ARE A FEW THEMES, HOWEVER, WORTH REPETITION AND COMMENT HERE.

A. WHEN SEKSAN, THIRAYUT AND AOTHER PANELISTS TALKED ABOUT ENEMIES OF THAI LABOR, THEY NEVER LEFT OUT THE AMERICANS--AND THE AUDIENCE ALWAYS APPLAUDED WITH VIGOR. THERE WAS LITTLE, IF ANYTHING, THAT SEKSAN AND THIRAYUT FELT WAS WORTHY OF FAVORABLE COMMENT WHERE AMERICANS WERE CONCERNED.

B. SEVERAL TIMES THE VARIOUS SPEAKERS STATED THEIR BELIEF THAT WEAPONS ARE MEANINGLESS WHEN COMMITTED AGAINST PEOPLE WHO HAVE A CAUSE. SEKSAN AND THIRAYUT BOTH EMPHASIZED THIS AS A BASIC LESSON OF OCTOBER 1973 AND A REASON THE PEOPLE SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO MASS AGAIN IN PROTEST IF THERE IS A MILITARY COUP.

C. THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD HAVE LABORERS IN IT AS WELL AS THE MORE EDUCATED. TOO OFTEN THE SO-CALLED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HAD TO "WALK, SWEAT, GET DIRTY, OR WORRY ABOUT THEIR NEXT MEALS."

D. STUDENTS AND LABOR SHOULD WORK MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER. SEKSAN STRUCK A MOST RESPONSIVE CHORD WHEN HE OPENED BY SAYING THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME HE HAD EVER SEEN LABORERS AND THE COMMON PEOPLE IN LARGE NUMBERS ACTUALLY ENTER THE UNIVERSITY AND USE ITS FACILITIES. HE ADDED THAT THE UNIVERSITY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO SERVE THE PEOPLE, AND THAT STUDENTS AND LABORERS SHOULD ALWAYS WORK TOGETHER.

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3. DR. PUAI UNGPHAKON FOLLOWED THE PANLISTS. HE WAS SHORT AND TO THE POINT. "WE NEED TO HELP OURSELVES, COOPERATE AMONG OURSELVES, AND MAKE THE CONSTITUTION A LIVING DOCUMENT BY USING IT TO DEFEND OUR INTERESTS." HE DEBUNKED THE CRITICISM BY SOME (UNNAMED) PERSONS THAT THE EVENTS AT THAMMASAT ON MAY DAY, AND THOSE WHO SPEAK OUT AS SEKSAN AND THIRAYUT DO ARE COMMUNIST INSPIRED. HE SAID THAT

SEKSAN AND THIRAYUT WERE ONLY SPEAKING THE TRUTH WHEN THEY TALKED ABOUT HOW UNREPRESENTATIVE THE THAI SOCIAL-POLITICAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN IN THE PAST. AND SPEAKING OUT AS HE AND THEY WERE DOING ON MAY DAY WAS NOT COMMUNIST. IT WAS DEMOCRACY IN ACTION.

4. HOWEVER CORRECT PUAJ WAS IN HIS SPEECH INSIDE THE AUDITORIUM, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT COMMUNISTS ARE NOT SOMEHOW INFLUENCING THE THOUGHTS OF SOME WHO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH ACTIVITIES. OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM WERE MANY TABLES PILED WITH COMMUNIST MATERIALS--WORKS OF AND ABOUT MAO, CHI MINH, MARX, LENIN, EVEN LIN PIAO--WERE ON SALE. POSTERS AND BOOKS PAINTED THE UNITED STATES AS "MR. BAD GUY--OPPRESSOR EXTRAORDINAIRE*" ONE POSTER URGED LABORERS TO BEWARE OF FOREIGN AGENCIES THAT ARE REALLY WATCHDOGS. IT IDENTIFIED THESE AGENCIES AS THE LABOR CENTER OF THAILAND, THE BROTHERHOOD OF ASIAN TRADE UNIONS FROM THE PHILIPPINES, THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS FROM THE CIA, AND THE ASIAN AMERICAN FREE LABOR INSTITUTE FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY.

5. COMMENT: FOR THE AMERICAN OBSERVER THERE WAS SOMETHING DEPRESSING ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE AND HIS COUNTRY, IN THE SPEECHES AND THE LITERATURE FOR SALE AROUND THE CAMPUS, WERE INCLUDED AMONG THE ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE.

6. SEKSAN AND THIRAYUT WERE THE MOST INSPIRING OF THE FIVE PANELISTS WHO SPOKE ON THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE COMMON MAN IN THAILAND. THEIR INTERACTION WITH THE AUDIENCE GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT A FUSION OF POWER AND INTEREST WAS BEGINNING TO DEVELOP, ALBEIT IN THIS ADMITTEDLY LIMITED SETTING. (THE BULK OF WORKERS IN BANGKOK, CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM STATE OWNED ENTERPRISE, ATTENDED A GOVERNMENT SPONSORED GATHERING IN LUMPINI PARK WHERE EMPHASIS WAS ON ENTERTAINMENT AND NOT POLITICS.) IN 1973 THE STUDENTS TRIED HARD TO DEVELOP A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH LABOR AND FAILED. SEKSAN AND THIRAYUT WERE OBVIOUSLY HAVING SOME SUCCESS THIS TIME AROUND.

7. DR. PUAJ UNGPHAKON, WHOSE TALK FOLLOWED THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS, DEMONSTRATED CLEARLY WHY THE COMMON MAN REGARDS HIM SO HIGHLY. HE SPOKE BRIEFLY, USING THE SIMPLEST LANGUAGE WITH NO DIALECTICS, AND STRESSED THE NEED OF THE THAI PEOPLE TO HELP AND DEPEND ON THEMSELVES, AND TO FORCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF REAL DEMOCRACY IN THAILAND BY AMKING THE CONSTITUTION A LIVING DOCUMENT. MASTERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MUSIC, SLOGANS, MAY DAY, UNIVERSITIES, SPEECHES, STUDENTS, LABOR POLICY LINE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BANGKO07162
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740105-0327
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740581/aaaacune.tel
Line Count: 169
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. FBIS BANGKOK D020220Z MAY 74
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 JUL 2002 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <17 JAN 2003 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAY DAY AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
TAGS: PINS, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005